REMARKS

Claims 1-5, 7-10 and 19-25 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as allegedly being unpatentable over EP 1741991 to Aisa et al. in view of United States Publication No. US 2002/0017495 to Iizuka et al. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection is requested.

Independent claims 1 and 20 have been amended to incorporate the flow directing valve previously recited in claims 2 and 21. The flow directing valve distributes supply water within the washing appliance. The flow directing valve is actively controlled (by the programmed controller recited in claims 1 and 20) to provide a blend of supply water and softened water to the wash chamber.

Aisa discloses a water softener for a washing machine. The water softener comprises a resin compartment (R) and a brine compartment (S). Supply water is softened in the resin compartment (R) before use in the washing machine. The supply line to the resin compartment (R) incorporates an "air breaker" (5) and a calibrated hole (not shown). The calibrated hole provides a small volume of water to a volumetric cavity (7). The water collected in the volumetric cavity (7) is used to transport brine from the brine compartment (S) to the resin compartment during resin regeneration. Overflow from the volumetric cavity (7) and waste supply water unable to overcome the air breaker (5) are dispensed in to the washing tub through a drain hole (8) (paragraph [0020]).

Iizuka discloses a water softener with parallel softening compartments capable of providing a continuous supply of softened water. The water softener alternates the softening compartments to allow the resins within the non-active compartment to be regenerated. A pump (15) supplies salt water from the brine chamber (14) to the regenerating chamber (4 or 11) during

resin regeneration. The pump (15) provides a predetermined volume of salt water to the softening chambers during regeneration.

The Examiner asserts that "Aisa also does not disclose a two-way flow valve, but does disclose a functional equivalent water distribution device. . . Device 1 clearly has the ability to distribute water to various components of the washing machine". The Examiner further asserts that "Iizuka also teaches a multi-way valve 6 than [sic] can control the delivery of water from the water softener and the mains."

Neither Aisa nor Iizuka discloses an actively controlled flow directing valve capable of introducing supply water directly to the wash chamber. The directing valve provides a regulated blend of softened and raw water to the wash chamber.

The water softener arrangement recited in independent claims 1 and 20 allows controlled volumes of supply water and softened water to be blended to provide a desired water hardness. Intelligent blending improves salt efficiency and prevents over softening the wash water.

The water softener disclosed in Aisa is incapable of intelligent blending. The drain hole (8) is used to dispose of waste supply water (overflow or leakage). The volume of supply water disposed directly to the wash tub is not monitored or controlled.

The water softener disclosed in Iizuka provides a continuous supply of softened water. The four-way valve (6 and 13) at the outlet of each water softener compartment allows the ion exchange resin to be rinsed with raw water at the completion of the regeneration process (paragraphs [0020] and [0021]). A non-regenerating polisher (8) is provided at the outlet of each softener compartment (after the respective four-way valves) to remove any residue hardness in the processed water (paragraph [0019]) before being discharged from the water softener.

Therefore, Applicant submits that Aisa in view of Iizuka does not render obvious amended claims 1 and 20 as the combination does not disclose an actively controlled flow directing valve capable of introducing supply water directly to the wash chamber as recited in amended claims 1 and 20. Thus, withdrawal of the rejection and reconsideration and allowance of claims 1 and 20 is requested.

Claims 3-5, 7-10 and 19 are dependent upon claim 1 which Applicants submit is in condition for allowance. Therefore, Applicants submit that claims 3-5, 7-10 and 19 are allowable. Reconsideration and allowance is requested.

Claims 22-25 are dependent upon claim 20 which Applicants submit is in condition for allowance. Therefore, Applicants submit that claims 22-25 are allowable. Reconsideration and allowance is requested.

Claim 6 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as allegedly being unpatentable over Aisa in view of Iizuka and further in view of EP 0545127 to Milocco. Claim 6 is dependent upon claim 1 which Applicants submit is in condition for allowance. Therefore, Applicants submit that claim 6 is allowable. Reconsideration and allowance is requested.

Claim 18 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as allegedly being unpatentable over Aisa in view of WO 01/26532 to Maunsell. Claim 18 is dependent upon claim 1 which Applicants submit is in condition for allowance. Therefore, Applicants submit that claim 18 is allowable. Reconsideration and allowance is requested.

Applicants have concurrently submitting Petition for a One -Month Extension of Time to respond to this Office Action, therefore extending the deadline to February 23, 2010.

Should the Examiner have any questions regarding this Amendment, the Examiner is invited to contact one of the undersigned attorneys at (312) 704-1890.

Respectfully submitted,

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By: _____

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